

INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
USAID Grant: 520-A00-04-00109/8071

QUARTERLY REPORT
FINAL REPORT
Guatemala

Technical Assistance for Guatemala Single National Identity Document Implementation

I. SUMMARY

In an attempt to ensure a transparent electoral process for the upcoming presidential elections, Guatemalans recognized the need to create a national identity document that is not easily forgeable. This has led the Guatemalan Congress to seek the reform of the existing electoral law and to create a single national identity document also known as “Documento Unico de Identidad” (DUI). IRI will provide the Congressional Committee on Electoral Reform with information and analysis necessary to develop, pass, and implement the law establishing the DUI. Thus, by focusing on the passage and implementation of the DUI, IRI seeks to assist the Guatemalan government in improving citizen participation and confidence during the country’s upcoming elections and political processes.

II. BACKGROUND

In June, 2004, IRI received a CEPPS grant to provide technical assistance in Guatemala for the implementation of a Single National Identity Document (DUI). The following are IRI’s programmatic goals for 2004:

1. Improve citizen participation and confidence in Guatemala’s election and political process.
2. Improve the transparency and efficiency of the electoral process.

III. PROJECT ACTIVITIES

From July – December 2004, IRI focused on overseeing the advancement of the electoral reform legislation that conceives a credible and reliable Single National Identity Document, also known as the Documento Unico de Identidad (DUI). Throughout the duration of the program, several meetings were held between IRI,

USAID and the OAS, as well as with members of the Congressional Committee on Electoral Reform, to analyze the implementation process of a law supporting the DUI.

In August, 13 members of the Guatemalan Congressional Committee on Electoral Reform (nine Congressmen and four Congresswomen) traveled to Peru to meet with their Peruvian counterparts who had recently passed an Election Reform bill. More specifically, the Guatemalan delegation observed a singular component of this bill, that of the implementation of the Peruvian version of the DUI, known as Registro Nacional de Identificación y Estado Civil (RENIEC).

During their week-long stay in Peru, the Guatemalan delegation met with their Peruvian counterparts as well as with the President of Peru's Congress, Antero Flores. The delegation also visited RENIEC offices to get an in-depth look at the logistics behind the implementation of the document and later traveled to a smaller province to observe its practical impact and usage.

Following their trip to Peru, the delegation traveled to El Salvador to discuss that country's national identity document and its role in improving the efficiency and transparency in the March 2004 presidential elections.

During October and into early November, IRI redoubled its efforts to encourage the Assembly to expedite consideration of the DUI legislation. During the last quarter, IRI in consultation with the "Comision Especifica para las Reformas Electorales", the AID Mission, and the Organization of American States, had planned to coordinate public presentations of the project by bringing politicians from Mexico, El Salvador, and Peru to Guatemala. Unfortunately, these public meetings were not possible because the DUI project was affected by the Guatemalan Congress's shift in focusing greater attention on electing a new leadership team, among other internal matters.

IV. EVALUATION

The Guatemalan Congressional delegation's trip to Peru was an essential part in the advancement of the passage of the law supporting the DUI. Indeed, the meetings held between the Guatemalan Congressmen and their Peruvian counterparts resulted in an increased focus on the electoral reforms that will advance the implementation of the DUI.

Congresswoman Virna Lopez, President of the Guatemalan Congress' Committee on Electoral Reform, explained the importance of having a credible system of national identification. Congresswoman Lopez addressed the Guatemalan and Peruvian Press to express her gratitude and satisfaction with this initiative. More specifically, the entire delegation commended the Peruvian Congress in its

endorsement of RENIEC as a credible system of identification, and acknowledged the need for Guatemala to implement a similar system.

Following meetings with Eduardo Ruiz Botto, Director of the RENIEC, the delegation committed itself to incorporate RENIEC's successful work into their own electoral reform legislation. Indeed, upon their return to Guatemala, the delegation pushed for a finalized draft of the Election Reform bill based on the Peru model.

Result # 1: DUI legislation introduced in Congress.

Currently, Congress is still working to finalize the law in support of the DUI legislation. The trip to Peru gave an opportunity to the Congressional Committee on Electoral Reform to incorporate RENIEC's best practices and prepare a draft legislation on the DUI. However, due to competing interest and internal political conflicts in Congress, IRI and the AID mission in Guatemala agreed to suspend activities on the DUI.

Result # 2: Greater public understanding of and support for DUI

The meetings held between the Guatemalan Congressmen and their Peruvian counterparts resulted in an increased focus on the electoral reforms which is a fundamental component to advance the implementation of the DUI. However, for greater public understanding of the DUI to be reached the congress must first approve the law.